

# **U.S. Government Assistance for Syria**

December 10, 2012

The United States continues to support the Syrian people as the newly-formed Syrian Opposition Coalition sets a course toward the start of the peaceful, democratic, inclusive future that the people of Syria deserve. Assistance includes our vigorous diplomatic support of the newly formed Syrian Opposition Coalition, humanitarian assistance to help those affected by the conflict, and non-lethal support for local councils and civil society inside Syria.

- The United States supports the Syrian people's aspirations for Syrian-led transition to a more just, inclusive, and peaceful Syria. We are working with likeminded states to further isolate the regime and support the Syrian people's calls for Asad to depart from power. An estimated 40,000 Syrians have been killed over the past 20 months of unrest and violence, and the regime's legitimacy has completely collapsed. The United States and the like-minded countries are supporting the Syrian Opposition Coalition's efforts to advance a political transition in Syria and helping the Syrian people pursue a democratic transition.
- In partnership with the United Nations and the international community, the United States is providing nearly \$200 million in humanitarian assistance through established international humanitarian and non-governmental organizations to support the urgent humanitarian needs of those inside Syria and in neighboring countries who are affected by the continuing violence in Syria. As the winter approaches, we are coordinating closely with the Coalition and civilian groups inside Syria to ensure that our assistance best serves the needs of the Syrian people. We continue to develop ways for humanitarian assistance to reach previously inaccessible areas inside Syria. All humanitarian assistance is provided on the basis of need and not political affiliation.
- The United States is also providing approximately \$50 million in non-lethal support to the unarmed Syrian opposition and civil society groups, including local councils and grassroots organizations. This assistance provides training and equipment to the Syrian non-violent opposition to build up a nation-wide network of ethnically and religiously diverse civilian activists, which will help promote unity among the Syrian people and accelerate the country's democratic transition. It builds the capacity of local councils and grassroots organizations and supports their efforts to respond to the needs of their communities and mobilize ongoing non-violent protest movements. Finally, our assistance includes support for independent media, efforts to document abuses of the regime, and transition planning.

## **Diplomatic Support**

The United States was actively engaged in the Doha meetings in late November, which launched the Syrian Opposition Coalition. In subsequent meetings and at the upcoming Friends of the Syrian People meeting that will gather in Marrakesh in mid-December, the United States is supporting efforts to strengthen the Syrian peoples' leadership of the transition underway. To ensure that our assistance responds to the most pressing needs of the Syrian people, we are closely coordinating with the Coalition and Syrian-based unarmed opposition groups.

## **Humanitarian Assistance**

The Assad regime's war on its own civilian population has precipitated a critical humanitarian crisis, with an estimated 40,000 killed over the past 20 months. The United States is providing nearly \$200 million in humanitarian aid to assist the four million people in need inside Syria and the more than 460,000 Syrian refugees now living in neighboring countries. The U.S. funds are providing urgently needed food, clean water, medical supplies, emergency medical care, and mental health support for children. The United States is also providing relief supplies, such as plastic sheeting to repair damaged buildings, warm clothes, blankets and heaters to help conflict-affected families survive the coming winter. Details of United States' humanitarian support to the Syrian people are regularly updated and can be found at: [www.usaid.gov/crisis/syria](http://www.usaid.gov/crisis/syria).

### **Transition Support to the Unarmed Opposition**

The United States has committed \$50 million to strengthen the capacity of Syria's unarmed opposition groups to facilitate a Syrian-led political transition. These resources aim to help Syrian non-violent opposition groups sustain their activities through strengthening civil society, media and democratic transition planning.

Support to *civil society groups* and local councils includes efforts to train, equip and build the capacity of grassroots activists and opposition groups – including women and youth – primarily inside the country; develop existing and emerging groups' abilities to mobilize citizens, share information and build networks, provide services to their communities, and undertake civic functions; support interreligious and communal dialogues to encourage strong citizen participation in shaping the transition's trajectory; develop women's leadership capacity to play a robust role in the transition; support professional human rights documentation and transitional justice workshops, and prepare for Syria's political transition and lay the foundation for future accountability efforts.

Support to independent *media projects* includes community radio stations providing information for refugees about available services, training for networks of citizen journalists, bloggers, and cyber-activists to support their ability to document, package, and disseminate information on developments inside Syria and provide independent news reporting; and technical assistance and equipment to enhance the information and communications security of Syrian activists within Syria.

Assistance in support of *democratic transition planning* includes efforts to facilitate linkages between unarmed opposition elements inside Syria with supporters outside the country; resources to help establish the Syria Justice and Accountability Center as an independent entity that documents human rights abuses and coordinates transitional justice and accountability efforts among Syrian and international groups; and facilitating Syrian activists' participation in political and economic transition planning, to facilitate the active engagement of the business community in transition processes, and technical assistance to emerging political parties within the country.

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